



State of Connecticut
HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONN. 06106

Testimony in Support of HB 5754 and HB 5755
Veterans' Affairs Committee
February 19, 2013

Chairmen Leone and Hennessy, Ranking Members Welch and Yaccarino, and distinguished members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of *House Bill 5754, AAC Mental Health Services for Veterans and Members of the Armed Forces* and *HB 5755, AAC Affordable Housing for Veterans and Members of the Armed Forces*.

The men and women who bravely serve our country endure some of the most horrific events imaginable. Yet, when they return home from service, many service members face personal battles. The two bills proposed here today seek to offer help in overcoming two hardships faced by many veterans who return home -- mental health services, and affordable housing.

HB 5754 seeks to increase state resources to better identify, through screening programs, the mental health needs of veterans and active members of the armed forces. Servicemen returning home often go through periods of depression, anxiety and other mental ailments. Additionally, servicemen and women are reported to have excessive rates of suicide above the national average. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has made available nearly \$56M in new grants for suicide prevention. We hope the state will take advantage of the funding opportunities and that we as a legislature can build upon that.

HB 5755 attempts to enhance state resources dedicated to assisting veterans find safe and affordable housing. Many veterans returning may have no place to return to. However, affordable housing is not needed for just the younger service members. CT's veteran population is rapidly aging. Reports indicate that nearly 75% of the more than 222,000 veterans living in the state are over the age of 55. As this population continues to age, they will encounter more health issues and require more, permanent, daily living arrangements. The state must be ready to provide assisted living arrangements for a population that in some cases has very limited financial means.

We know this Committee will do everything possible to ensure that the men and women who serve to protect us will be afforded every opportunity to return to a relatively normal life. We believe these bills will assist in that endeavor. We look forward to working with you to move these bills along. Thank you.